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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2875
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RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0218
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 0839
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1682
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ MAR LIMA 5487
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO 1219
RUEHQD/AMEMBASSY QUITO 1822
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STATE FOR IIP/G/WHA, INR/R/MR, WHA/BSC, WHA/PDA, INR/IAA

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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CHILE ON COLOMBIA-ECUADOR CONFLICT

REF: A) Santiago 209, B) Santiago 207

¶1. Summary: Chile's media has given prominent coverage to Foreign Minister Foxley's comments and efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Colombia-Ecuador conflict. While he echoed President Bachelet's emphasis on the sanctity of respecting borders, Foxley also condemned terrorism and guerrillas trespassing borders to conduct activities in third countries. The media also focused attention on two Chilean Communists photographed with the FARC leader three days before his death. The Communist Party acknowledged that the two Chileans, who visited the FARC camp in Ecuador, had returned safely to Chile. These actions may help confirm the authenticity of the data on the FARC leader's computer. End Summary.

Foreign Minister's Op-Ed

¶2. Foreign Minister Foxley has been vocal about the Colombia military operation against FARC leader Raul Reyes in Ecuador. On March 6, "El Mercurio" published Foreign Minister Alejandro Foxley's op-ed titled: "Chile in the Regional Conflict."

¶3. "Chile is working actively with other countries in the region so that the crisis between Ecuador and Colombia can be resolved soon and dialogue between the two countries can be reestablished....

¶4. "We insist that those who wish to contribute in this matter... must only help to contain the conflict.... Chile has been extraordinarily clear in stating that it is essential to respect, under all circumstances, the principle of sovereignty and territorial integrity, avowed by international law and stated in the OAS Charter. It is a principle that we will always strongly defend and one that we have reiterated this time with our explicit support of Ecuador....

¶5. "But we have stated with the same determination that we condemn terrorism and reject any act associated with it.... And in the case that today affects the region, we strongly reject the incursion of the guerrillas into another country and we condemn the kidnappings....

¶6. "Chile has underscored that the insurrection of irregular forces can only make Colombia's challenge to find peace more difficult and threaten efforts underway in Latin America to join forces through concrete cooperation and integration....

¶7. "Chile said at the OAS that it is necessary to reestablish trust and generate the conditions to find a solution to this situation, which affects a founding principle of the Inter-American system....

We have the highest desire to facilitate an understanding and will be cooperating with a positive attitude with the parties involved."

Chilean Communists Visited FARC Leader

¶8. A Chile connection to Reyes has generated interest in Santiago dailies, including the FARC's longtime relationship with Chile's Communist Party. Conservative "La Tercera" (circ. 101,000) published on March 6 an article about two Chileans whose photographs reportedly were found on a computer belonging to the dead Colombian FARC leader:

¶9. "The Colombian press published a photograph of Raul Reyes with Chileans Valeska Lopez and Manuel Olate next to him. The Chileans, both Communist Party members, were with Reyes three days before his death. Both had traveled to Ecuador for a Bolivarian conference. During that same trip, they took the opportunity to visit a Colombian guerrilla base in Ecuador, along with a delegation of Peruvians, Mexicans, Bolivians, and other Chileans." Communist Party Secretary General Lautaro Carmona indicated that the two are not part of any armed group and had returned to Chile on Tuesday."

SIMONS